

Minutes
October 30, 2003
Bay City State Recreation Area
Saginaw Bay Visitor Center
Bay City, Michigan

NRC Policy Committee on Land Management

DRAFT State Recreation and Game Area Boundary Recommendations

PRESENT:

Commissioner Paul Eisele, Chair, NRC Policy Committee on Land Management
Commissioner Keith Charters, NRC Chair
Commissioner John Madigan
Director K. L. Cool, DNR
Resource Management Deputy George E. Burgoyne, Jr., DNR
Dennis Knapp, Legislative Liaison, DNR
Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Chief Mindy Koch and Staff, DNR
Parks and Recreation Acting Chief Lowen Schuett and Staff, DNR
Wildlife Chief Rebecca Humphries and Staff, DNR
Land and Facilities Chief David Freed and Staff, DNR
Representatives of outside organizations and other interested parties.

OPENING REMARKS

Commissioner Eisele called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Resource Management Deputy George Burgoyne explained that State parks boundaries were reviewed last month. State recreation area and State game area boundary recommendations will be presented at this meeting. This Committee is still in Phase I of the ownership strategy, reviewing all State project boundaries and making recommendations for revised boundaries. Following public input and approval by the Director, the boundary review process will move into a more detailed review of all lands, beginning in Phase II with lands outside the approved project boundaries. Over the coming year, the Department will come back to this Committee periodically to present further recommendations on land ownership and boundary revisions.

STATE RECREATION AREA BOUNDARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Lowen Schuett, DNR Parks and Recreation Acting Chief, acknowledged **Mike Evanoff**, Bay City State Recreation Area Park Manager, and **Carl Lindell**, District Park Supervisor, and then introduced Parks and Recreation staff to make the presentation.

Parks and Recreation gave an overview of criteria and sources used to review State recreation areas, using the same criteria as State park boundaries. Recommendations for 19 State recreation areas were presented, including 11 sites with limited boundary changes and 8 sites with expanded boundaries to protect natural, cultural, or recreational resources. Several sites were reviewed and discussed by the Committee and Department staff. It was noted that, compared to 15 years ago, current stewardship practices and innovative technology has allowed for significant improvements in the review of land ownership patterns and boundaries.

The Department regularly addresses issues of operational and resource needs, development pressure, resource protection, in-holdings, building and road trespass, and requests for access across State lands. A majority of the park and recreation area boundaries in southeast Michigan are irregular because of development patterns. These areas face the greatest development pressure, which makes protection of buffer zones and natural resources difficult. In Phase II of the boundary reviews, the intent is to further explore opportunities to create clearly identifiable boundaries through acquisition, exchange, or partnerships. Lands that may be excess to the Department's mission and management objectives will also be identified for further consideration.

Administrative costs, taxes, and the use of deed restrictions were raised and discussed.

Director Cool commented that some areas warrant further resource protection, and may be implemented through intra-agency transfer, inter-agency exchange, or partnerships.

Resource Management Deputy George Burgoyne stated there are a lot of opportunities to partner with other conservation agencies, organizations, and local government. Some agencies and organizations have expressed an interest in partnering with the Department to maintain facilities, protect the resources, and continue to provide hunting, fishing, boating, and other recreational opportunities. After further review, the Department will identify key conservation partners and contact those agencies or organizations for further discussion at that time.

Commissioner Charters cautioned the Department to ensure conditions are in place to maintain recreational opportunities and protect the natural resources.

STATE GAME AND WILDLIFE AREA BOUNDARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Rebecca Humphries, DNR Wildlife Chief, introduced staff to make the presentation on State game and wildlife area boundaries. She commented that Wildlife has made great strides in mapping their boundaries using topographical maps, aerial photos, county plat maps, advanced technology and other sources of information.

Wildlife presented a brief overview on the history of State game and wildlife areas, how lands are acquired using federal funds, State game and fish funds, other funding sources and acquisition opportunities. Wildlife's purpose for acquisition and main focus for management of these areas is restoration of wildlife and wildlife habitat, as well as providing hunting opportunities.

The Department manages 96 State game and/or wildlife areas, with the majority located in Southern Michigan. Existing State game and wildlife area boundaries, the criteria used to conduct boundary reviews and revised boundary recommendations were presented. A number of specific game and/or wildlife areas in Southern Michigan were discussed in detail, identifying those that are recommended for limited or minor changes and those with significant changes.

Other opportunities for acquiring, managing, conserving and protecting these lands have included exchanges with other State agencies, co-management or inter-agency transfers, U. S. Forest Service and U. S. Fish and Wildlife exchanges or gifts of land, tax reversions in Southern Michigan, North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants, and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Due to limited funds and development pressures, Wildlife plans to focus on acquiring larger tracts of land in Southern Michigan, including in-holdings, based on population, recreational use, conservation potential, and funding sources, and dispose of lands that are surplus to Department needs. Wildlife also addresses issues associated with in-holdings, encroachments, trespass, hunting and safety zone restrictions and objections to natural resource management. Blocking in these ownership patterns will help clarify the boundaries, making it easier for public use and in managing and conserving their natural resources. Other parcels will still be considered based on their continued use, habitat, natural features or other characteristics.

In Phase II, Wildlife will review lands outside the proposed boundaries to determine if they continue to serve the Department's mission of restoring wildlife and maintaining wildlife habitat, and continue to provide recreational opportunities and public enjoyment.

Commissioner Eisele thanked staff for their presentation. A list of the game and/or recreation areas identified under each category will be provided.

CLOSING BUSINESS

Commissioner Eisele thanked Parks and Wildlife for their presentations and commended them for the time and effort involved to review these boundaries and compile this information.

Commissioner Madigan made a motion, supported by Commissioner Charters, to approve the September 23, 2003 Minutes. The motion unanimously carried.

The Committee agreed that the next meeting would be held November 25 in Lansing to review State forest boundary recommendations. **Commissioner Eisele** asked about the format of the forestry presentation. **Mindy Koch, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Chief**, responded that the format will be similar, but the scale will be considerably different. State forest boundaries are complex, and have not been reviewed or updated in a long time.

Commissioner Eisele adjourned the meeting at 12:15 pm.